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SUBJECT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BEGINS FORMAL DEBATE ON
KERRY-LUGAR

REF: ISLAMABAD 2393

¶1. (U) Summary. Pakistan's National Assembly commenced formal debate on the Kerry-Lugar legislation on October 7. The PML-N's Chaudhry Nisar -- the leader of the parliamentary opposition -- criticized the bill's conditions, while PM Gilani stressed that these conditions are not "binding" on Pakistan. The debate will continue on October 8. Separately, Pakistan's military leadership expressed concern about Kerry-Lugar clauses "impacting on national security," but emphasized that parliament would deliberate on the issue and enable the government to develop a national response. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Pakistan's National Assembly commenced formal debate on Kerry-Lugar on October 7. The PML-N's Chaudhry Nisar, the leader of the parliamentary opposition, complained that Pakistan has put its honor on the line for "peanuts." No fancy speeches by the government can undo what is written in the Kerry-Lugar bill. All those who are criticizing Kerry-Lugar's critics should read the bill for themselves, because its wording is quite clear, Nisar argued. He complained about a Kerry-Lugar which, he claimed, would prevent Pakistan from taking any kind of action, military or otherwise, against India. This is not the business of the United States, he maintained. He described as a glaring violation of Pakistan's sovereignty the condition requiring Pakistan's continued cooperation with the U.S. on dismantling nuclear proliferation networks. Any time there are allegations about Pakistani proliferation, this should be an internal Pakistani matter, he claimed. Nisar contended that India and Pakistan are in the same position -- NPT non-signatories with nuclear weapons -- yet with India, the United States has a very different approach, striking a civil nuclear deal. Nisar also complained about the Kerry-Lugar condition regarding the promotion of senior military officers. Pakistan, he said, should be able to promote anyone it sees fit without outside interference. (NOTE: Nisar was referring to language in the bill requiring that the State Department's monitoring report on Kerry-Lugar include an assessment of civilian and parliamentary control over senior military promotions. END NOTE.) If the U.S. is serious about getting Pakistanis to be pro-American, it should not attach conditions to its aid, Nisar argued. Despite his criticisms of Kerry-Lugar, Nisar stressed that regardless of the differences between PML-N and PPP, the PML-N would not undermine or sabotage the government.

¶3. (U) Prime Minister Gilani, speaking on behalf of the

government, underlined that Kerry-Lugar's conditions are not binding on Pakistan; rather, they are requirements for U.S. legislative purposes. Moreover, if Pakistan does not meet the conditions, it may lose some military assistance, but other assistance would continue. Responding to Nisar's remarks on nuclear proliferation, Gilani emphasized that Pakistan would not grant access to its nuclear facilities. He argued that the fact that the National Assembly is debating Kerry-Lugar is a demonstration of the success of Pakistan's parliamentary democracy; when the Brown and Pressler amendments were passed in the U.S., there was no such parliamentary debate in Pakistan. Another success of parliamentary democracy is the fact President Obama had postponed signing Kerry-Lugar to first follow the parliamentary debate and then make up his mind accordingly (sic). Gilani took positive note of Nisar's statement that PML-N would not undermine the government.

¶4. (U) JUI-F's Fazlur Rahman spoke next. He said that it is very much in Pakistan's interests to prevent terrorism and fight corruption, but the U.S. should not be dictating this to Pakistan. Shortly after he began his remarks, a point of order was raised that there was no quorum in the chamber. The chair agreed, resulting in an adjournment of the session to the following day (October 8).

¶5. (U) Separately on October 7, ISPR, the military's public relations service, issued a statement reporting on the 122nd Corps Commanders Conference, which was held at General Headquarters that day and chaired by Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Kayani. The statement noted that Kerry-Lugar

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was discussed at the conference. According to the statement, the participants "expressed serious concern regarding clauses (of Kerry-Lugar) impacting on national security" and formal input is being provided to the government. However, the statement continued, in the view of the participants, parliament represents the will of the people and would deliberate on Kerry-Lugar, enabling the government to develop a national response.

¶6. (SBU) The Ambassador was in touch with Shabbaz Sharif twice during the day to urge restraint and explain the bill. PATTERSON